

Club Chameleon

DEDICATION

This year the Town of Newmarket recognizes the arduous work and achievements of the over 200 members and the supportive staff of Club Chameleon by dedicating Newmarket's annual report to this outgoing group of teenagers.

Club Chameleon is a nonprofit Outdoor Adventure Club that was developed and staffed in association with the Newmarket Recreation Department. Although Club Chameleon is a non-profit program run under the Newmarket Recreation umbrella, it is solely responsible for its own funding and is completely run by a staff of volunteers. The program's financial support success is due to a team of individuals including; the marketing efforts of Aimee Gigandet, the solicitation of donations and corporate sponsorships by Jim Hilton, the grant writing efforts of the Friends of Newmarket Recreation and the continuing fundraising efforts of the Chameleon staff and teens.

The Club's mission is to provide an all inclusive environment for teen's ages 10-16 years with experiences outside of their surroundings. The Club's philosophy is to focus on outdoor wilderness trips in addition to community service and social events that will foster personal growth and self worth by providing opportunities to interact with positive role models.

Club Chameleon was founded and established in 2004 under the leadership of Anneliese Fisher, better known as "mama bear." In the very first year Anneliese Fisher received an award for Community Leader of the Year for her initiative in creating the program. After only its first year, the program was awarded the prestigious Willie Shellnut State Award for excellence in "innovative programming" from the State of New Hampshire Recreation and Park's Association in 2005.

Each month Club Chameleon runs a different outdoor weekend experience for approximately twenty Newmarket teens and ten staff for a three-day and two-night adventure. Currently the program is preparing for their 39th outdoor adventure. Of these 39 trips the activities have included canoeing, kayaking, mountain climbing, mountain biking, fly fishing, snow skiing, snow sledding, dog sledding, deep sea fishing, hiking and much more. Each member of Club Chameleon must participate in two training sessions and each teen signs a Full Value Contract before they are permitted to go on each trip. This contract serves as their signed commitment pledge to establish, in collaboration with their peers, the rules and expectations of each trip. This instills ownership of the rule making process and responsibility in the teens.

Since 2004 Club Chameleon has expanded its programming on a yearly basis to meet the ever changing needs of Newmarket's teenage population. In the spring of 2005 Chameleon Connection was created to afford teens the opportunity to participate in a one-on-one mentoring program with athletes from the University of New Hampshire. Currently there are over 40 teens that participate in this program. In the Fall of 2006 Club Chameleon was one out of twenty programs in the country chosen by the National Recreation & Park Association to facilitate a national program called Teens Outside which enabled a group of Newmarket teens to learn advanced rock climbing and kayaking skills. In the summer of 2007 the teens participated in the National TakeMeFishing campaign where they were given the opportunity to learn from local masters the sport of fly-fishing. Now in 2008 Club Chameleon members have created "Teen Talk", a weekly meeting for teens to talk as a group about the stresses of everyday life.

When the teens of Club Chameleon are not out exploring the great outdoors they focus their efforts on community service. They believe in the "Pay It Forward" philosophy. If you reach out to help someone it has a ripple effect....one smile leads to another smile, one good deed leads to another good deed. This is the way they lead by example. For the past few years this group of teenagers worked on turning the Hilton Winn Farm into an outdoor environmental camp for kids. They have volunteered several weekends to work on the farm in order to create a learning environment for younger children.

This inspiring group of teenagers has volunteered on numerous occasions to mentor the younger generations here in Newmarket. They spent several days planning and teaching literacy to a group of pre-school age children in the Head Start Program. Each teen paired up with a child in the pre- school to organize and perform a literacy production of the very popular children's book The Very Hungry Caterpillar. These teens also volunteered to speak to several groups of pre-teens at the elementary school about the advantages of staying off drugs and alcohol, and shared stories about the positive effects of participating in outdoor education and adventures.

Just this past year the teens spent three full days at the Heritage Festival as the work force to help everything run

smoothly. From sun up to sun down you could spot a member of Club Chameleon volunteering to set up tents, chairs, booths, tables, carry supplies, clean, sweep and even take out the trash. There was no job too small or too big for this group.

When the runners came to race in Newmarket for the Great Bay Marathon and for the Old Home Weekend 5 K Road Race it was Club Chameleon that was running to help them. The teens helped to set up for the race; they worked the water stations and helped to direct the runners. From start to finish Club Chameleon was there to volunteer their time and efforts again hoping to pay it forward.

The Newmarket Town Officials recognize that the teenagers of Club Chameleon have a genuine desire to be active members of this community and we appreciate your hard work. We know that volunteering your time shows your commitment to your philosophy and can assure you that your efforts have made a difference. We also recognize the work it takes to facilitate this program and we want to thank all of the Club Chameleon staff, especially "mama bear" for volunteering your time to make this program such a huge success.

Although Club Chameleon follows the "Leave No Trace" philosophy while exploring the outdoors, they are certainly making their mark by leaving a trace of leadership and community spirit. This trace is turning a lot of heads as communities across the country look to model the recreational diversity found right here in Newmarket, New Hampshire.